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SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/18/2019  
TAGS: PREL KNNP EFIN TU IR FR IS  
SUBJECT: ISRAELI COMPLAINTS ABOUT TURKEY'S ROLE WITH IRAN  
DO NOT INCLUDE NUCLEAR-RELATED MATERIALS

REF: PARIS 1461

Classified By: Ambassador James B. Cunningham,  
Reason 1.4 (b) (d)

¶1. (S) Reftel reported that the French MFA readout to Embassy Paris on the Israeli-French Strategic Dialogue included Israeli claims that Turkey, with the full knowledge of PM Erdogan, has facilitated the supply of weapons-related materials for Iran's nuclear program. MFA Director of Political Research (INR A/S equivalent) Nimrod Barkan told PolCouns November 12 that this was an inaccurate summary of the briefing he delivered to the French. According to Barkan, Israel is concerned that Turkey is "becoming a platform" for Iran to evade financial sanctions. The Israelis also are convinced that Iran is continuing to ship weapons to Syria via Turkish territory, possibly with the knowledge of Turkish authorities. He categorically denied, however, that Israel had any intelligence pointing to a Turkish role in the shipment of weapons-related material for Iran's nuclear program.

¶2. (S) Barkan listed three areas in which Turkey is violating either UNSC or U.S. unilateral sanctions on Iran. These include new provisions to allow trade in Turkish Lira and Iranian Riyal through Iran's Bank Mellat, which is subject to U.S. Department of Treasury sanctions, the opening of Turkish ports for the export of Iranian goods to Europe, and ongoing shipment of Iranian weapons to Syria via Turkish territory, mostly by rail. Barkan said most of the arms are intended for Syrian transshipment to Hizballah in Lebanon. Barkan noted that the Israelis have raised all of these points directly with the GOT, beginning in June 2009, but so far to no avail.

¶3. (S) During an Israeli interagency briefing on Turkey November 15, the Mossad representative stated that Turkey has become a channel for Iran to by-pass financial sanctions and asserted that the Turks are turning a blind eye to Iranian arms transshipments to Syria. Asked whether the Mossad believes that Turkish officials are actually complicit in the arms shipments, the Mossad representative said the Israelis were not certain but felt that the Turks would be more responsive to U.S. than Israeli pressure to stop the flow of arms through Turkish territory.

¶4. (S) Comment: Barkan stressed to us that he did not believe that the French could have misunderstood his briefing. Given the seriousness of the incorrectly reported Israeli claim of Turkish cooperation in Iran's nuclear weapons program, we thought it important to set the record straight.

CUNNINGHAM